

News Release
U.S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
District of Rhode Island

April 29, 2004

Providence man pleads guilty to bank robbery

Joseph E. Beaver, of Providence, has pleaded guilty to federal bank robbery and firearms charges, admitting that he committed an armed robbery at a Sovereign Bank branch on Smith Street on November 28. Providence Police arrested Beaver shortly afterward in a house in Mount Pleasant as a result of information provided by a witness who had spotted the robber leaving the bank, called 911 from her car, and followed the robber's car.

The Office of the United States Attorney announced the guilty plea, which Beaver entered before Chief U.S. District Court Judge Ernest C. Torres in U.S. District Court, Providence, on April 23. Beaver, 38, whose address is unknown, is detained in federal custody pending sentencing, which is scheduled for July 22.

At the plea hearing, Assistant U.S. Attorney Gerard B. Sullivan said that, had the case gone to trial, the government would have proven that on November 28, Beaver, wearing a mask, entered the Sovereign Bank at 1025 Smith Street and, threatening the use of a gun, robbed three tellers of approximately \$20,000.

An arriving customer saw the robber leaving the bank and noticed signs of a disturbance inside. The customer called 911 from her car and, at a discreet distance, followed the robber's car. The witness lost sight of the car in the vicinity of Elmcroft Street and Academy Avenue but had kept 911 dispatchers apprized of the vehicle's whereabouts.

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“This citizen’s courageous action helped Providence Police track down this bank robber,” Assistant U.S. Attorney Sullivan said of the witness.

Patrol officers spotted the vehicle parked in a garage at 84 Elmcroft Street and, after obtaining permission from the owners to enter the building, found Beaver hiding under a bed in the first floor apartment. A gun, a mask, a bank bag and money were found in a bathroom.

Beaver pleaded guilty to armed bank robbery, using a firearm to commit a crime of violence, and being a felon in possession of a firearm. The statutory maximum term of imprisonment for each offense is: armed bank robbery – 25 years; using a firearm to commit a crime of violence – a minimum of five years, consecutive to any other sentence imposed, and a maximum of life; being a felon in possession of a firearm – ten years. Each offense also carries a maximum fine of \$250,000 fine.

Providence Police and the FBI investigated the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Gerard Sullivan is prosecuting it.

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Contact: 401-528-5224

e-mail: thomas.connell@usdoj.gov